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ABSTRACT

A method in bilingual education by which subjects can be taught in two languages, known as "the Concurrent Approach," is the school curriculum defined and discussed here. After a brief overview of the professional literature, the rationale for the implementation of this approach is offered on the basis of four criteria: (1) mental processes, (2) community patterns, (3) adaptation to these patterns to satisfy pedagogical objectives and (4) sociolinguistic reinterpretation of the roles of teacher and class. The central argument focuses on the "General Theme" and the "System of Cues." The theme emphasizes the equal prestige of both codes, and the cues stress the four fundamental notions of interpersonal relationships, language development, curriculum and classroom strategies. The implementation of the approach is then summarized and a bilingual workshop described where teachers have been trained in concurrent teaching techniques. It is concluded that, except for the teaching of language arts, bilingual children should be taught concurrently in their two languages; bilingual teachers should, therefore, acquire expertise in the set of strategies that incorporates sociolinguistic sensitivity, identification of socio-pedagogical cues, and conscious manipulation of switching practices. (Author/AMH)

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BEYOND ESL: The Teaching Of Content Other Than Language Arts in Bilingual Education

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0. Despite the recent pronouncements in regard to the role that E3L is playing within the bilingual education program, its position is still unclear and many teachers, as well as the general public, continue under the impression that children are taught bilingually when they are offered second language instruction. That ESL plays an important role in a school system where children with limited English-speaking abilities (LESA) are enrolled cannot be denied but a truly bilingual program only starts when children have acquired enough L-2 proficiency so as to function comfortably in both languages. ESL, then, is merely a preliminary stage, and one that is restricted to English language arts, in the child's educational process. It is upon this platform that the bilingual teacher must build to teach the child the subjects of the school curriculum. When the child is ready, through his own experience or his second language training (ESL for the Spanish-speaking and SSL for the English-speaking) to receive instruction of content in the two languages, the bilingual teacher must already have at his/her disposal a set of techniques specifically designed for the child to internalize and to retrieve the information given to him. It is the objective of this paper to describe in detail how the teacher can go beyond the ESL/SSL stage and teach the content of the school curriculum to those who learn as well in their native language as they do in their second language.

1. <u>The Concurrent Approach</u>

A technique that is most appropriate to teach content to bilingual children and to hereby utilize the full linguistic repertoire of these children is known

as the Concurrent Approach and is one in regard to which, the speaker has conducted abundant research involving the development of the more theoretical characteristics of the approach as well as its implementation and evaluation at the school level. This technique of bilingual instruction may be defined as a strategy through which the bilingual teacher teaches school subjects in both of the bilingual's two languages by using the two languages concurrently except when language arts is being taught. The teacher switches there frequently from one to the other language but only when such a codeswitching method is pedagogically justifiable. The following four criteria must however be met to make the approach a sound one:

(1) the two languages must be distributed equally, thus allowing as much time to one as to the other language;

(2) the actual teaching of content must be continued regardless of the switching from L-1 to L-2 and the lesson shall be carried on as planned.

(3) the bilingual teacher knows when and why s/he makes the transitions from one to the other language; and lastly

(4) the teacher must have in mind a specific learning goal for her children, thus avoiding the randomness that is observed in other implementations of the approach.

2. Prior research

Prior research on the topic is scarce. As a matter of fact, except for the favorable treatment of the closely related free alternation approach described by William Mackey in his fine monograph "Bilingual Education in a Binational School," a study of the bilingual method implemented in Berlin's J.F. Kennedy School, we only find a few general comments concerning the approach in the work of Andersson and Boyer (1970), Cordasco (1977) and a few others. The discussions of these latter do not reflect a deeper knowledge of the goals of the approach nor are their evaluations based on any known implementation of a program design where the Concurrent Approach had been chosen as a bilingual teaching mode. Their criticism is mainly based on two unproven assumptions,

i.e. (1) that bilingual teachers, who usually are dominant in either one or the other language, cannot control their language choice and will speak more often in one rather than the other language; in other words, they cannot achieve a 50-50 ratio and (2) teaching the child in both languages concurrently will confuse him and ultimately contribute to his/her mixing the two languages, thus making it too difficult for him/her to speak in one language at a time. It is my contention that teachers can be trained to distribute their two languages allowing equal time to either and that children can learn to speak one language exclusive of the other when their feeling for language appropriateness is properly developed (see below). Although little research is available with respect to the switching of codes by teachers and students, codeswitching as a community-related strategy has recently become an attractive research topic. At one conference alone, in Princeton, New Jersey, as many as eight papers concerning codeswitching were delivered. If the importance of this community pattern is further stressed, a greater concern also for the pedagogical side of the switching, the Concurrent Approach, can be predicted. As the desire to bring together the community and its schools increases, we can also expect the attempts of many --especially the sociolinguistically oriented program designer -- to employ or at least to adapt some of the societal patterns to the teaching of children in a school setting in order to render school activities less artificial than they presently are.

The speaker's own research in both fields, the societal and also the pedagogical perspectives of codeswitching may be familiar to some and consists of a number of studies which, over the last 3 years, have been presented at conferences or appeared in professional journals or anthologies. As a consultant for a South Texas bilingual education program which had incorporated in its design the "Concurrent Approach," he was fortunate enough to test out his interpretation of the approach and refine it as a result of the input from teachers,

administrators and professional agencies, a dialogue that eventually led to the formulation, in more concrete terms, what the Concurrent Approach is and what the rationale for its implementation might be. A brief discussion of this rationale may thus be in order.

3. A rationale for the Concurrent Approach

The Concurrent Approach can be justified on the basis of a number of basic assumptions or facts, which, because of the time limitation, can only be mentioned briefly. They are either psycholinguistic or sociolinguistic in nature and reveal inner or environmental factors that operate whenever bilinguals engage in communication. Some of the psycholinguistic considerations concern the ways how bilinguals store and retrieve information. It appears that they can do so in either language and it is difficult to predict in which language they would be more successful at a given moment. On the other hand, there seems to be no problem, at least for the fairly educated speaker, to separate the two languages when the situation requires it. Both of these facts indicate that the concurrent use of the two languages in a bilingual program may be the most appropriate technique to reach the bilingual child, as he internalizes information in both languages and runs very little danger in that the joint exposure to two languages will hurt him in any way. The sociolinguistic considerations refer to the interactional norms of the bilingual society and the role that the teacher should play in his/her class as s/he becomes sociologically more sophisticated. It is, without any doubt, the result of deeper sociological insights, that we are today trying to correlate school programs and community patterns as well as objectives and that we expect our teachers to be more sensitive to the social problems of our children. As for the latter, we may wish to find in our teachers the talents of a sociolinguistic investigator, so that s/he may analyze his/her class as if it were a social situation at large. If the interactional norms of the bilin-

gual society, on the other hand, permit a certain degree of language alternation, then it may be worth considering whether a similar degree of codeswitching might be acceptable as a teaching strategy. The sociolinguistic considerations, then, equally seem to favor the joint use of the two languages, as this would reflect the community's language behavior more effectively and, at the same time, would require of the bilingual teacher to analyze her students in a sociolinguistically more meaningful way.

4. General Theme and System of Cues

Once it is agreed that the concurrent use of the two languages is the best strategy to reach the bilingual child it behooves us to determine in what way the two languages shall be distributed in order to match the definition that is given above of the Concurrent Approach. No balanced distribution of the two languages can pertain, unless the individual grants equal prestige to both. Hence the general theme that permeates the whole approach is the "Prestige of Codes," that is, the belief that each language is an equally effective and valuable medium of communication. Thus, the attitudinal perspective is at the heart of the matter and the success of the approach is contingent on the self-awareness of both, the teacher's and the students'. The actual decision, however, when one or the other language should be chosen is ruled by a series of cues to which the individual participants in the school experience are expected to respond. These cues are grouped within four broader areas, i.e. interpersonal relationships, language development, curriculum and classroom strategies, and each of the cues marks a specific source that may trigger a language switch at a given moment, and the inventory of the cues serves as a guideline for the teacher to follow in order to balance out both linguistic codes.
Four classroom strategies seem to benefit from intersentential switching. A concept taught in language A can be reinforced more effectively if this is done

in language B. A lesson taught in language A can be reviewed in language B to add a new perspective to the review lesson. The switch from language A to language B is an effective strategy, just like Gumperz' metaphorical switching (Dil, 1971:294-96) in order to recapture the attention of one or more children whose mind(s) wandered off unexpectedly. To praise a child or to reprimand him is often done more convincingly in the child's dominant language. Hence, conceptual reinforcement, review, capturing of attention and approval/disapproval are being suggested as strategies where the switching from one to the other language is very effective.

The bilingual child is expected to become sensitive to those switches that occur because one language is more appropriate than the other at a given moment. By the same token, he can, regardless of school subject, react more enthusiastically to certain areas in content in, say, Spanish and to others in English. Finally, bilingual children must be encouraged to read about the same subject in both languages. They will do better in class discussion, if they are allowed to talk in Spanish about what they read in that language and, in English about what they read in the dominant language. In sum, language appropriateness, content and text are three important cues that trigger switches whenever curricular matters are of concern. Language is not only developed in the language arts class but also at other moments of the instructional process. Whereas the language arts class is restricted to the language that is being taught, the various school subjects allow the teacher to have the child who needs more proficiency in one language express him/herself in that language. Furthermore, s/he may wish to help the child in expanding his/her vocabulary range in the weaker language as well as have him/her acquire some expertise in rendering in language B what was just said in language A. Variable language dominance, lexical enrichment and translatability are therefore thought of as powerful goals in the language development of the bilingual child.

Not everything in the class is geared to the acquisition of information. There also occurs a great deal of interpersonal relationship between teacher and students that require of the former to make some meaningful decisions as to which language is more appropriate during the verbal interaction. Is this interaction rather intimate or is it formal? Is the preference of one over the other language a matter of courtesy or one of free choice? Is the child fatigued or does his/her self-awareness need be strengthened? Are we talking about the usual teacher-student relationship or one where the teacher wishes to establish an almost peer-like rapport with one or more of his/her students. The presence of any one of these cues may suggest a language switch to achieve a more satisfactory bilingual performance. Therefore, intimacy-formality, courtesy, free choice, fatigue, self-awareness and rapport have been proposed as cues under "Interpersonal Relationships" in order for the teacher to react to them by making a language choice decision that is most conducive to producing a truly bilingual atmosphere.

5. Implementation of approach

To implement the Concurrent Approach as here described , I have recently conducted a workshop[1] which was attended by 22 bilingual teachers of a South Texas school district. The school subjects Mathematics, Science and Social Studies were found to be most appropriate in demonstrating the effectiveness of the approach. After viewing several video demonstration lessons using the cited technique, workshop participants were being trained to develop bilingual lesson plans in which they would strategize their language alternations, so that some portions of the lesson would be taught in English and some other portions, in Spanish and would, in addition, specify at each switching point what pedagogical objective was to be accomplished by it. As these lesson plans were actually carried out in a number of mini lessons, teachers would make last minute adjustments to their plans, depending on the children's actual responses. Where teachers, for example, had planned

in advance for the child to respond in the language in which they were asked, they realized that the child would perform contrary to their expectation. It now became a matter of the teacher's resourcefulness to mentally reorganize the structure of the lesson to achieve the intended goal of the language switch. Each one of these lessons were also videotaped and would then serve as basis for discussion to participants and facilitators in order to explore the potentials of a creative bilingual class. Pilot studies of this nature will eventually be incorporated in teacher training modules for large scale implementation. These modules are intended to contain 5 segments: theory and application, demonstration classes, experimentations and critiques, limited implementations and full implementation. The participating bilingual teachers must understand the underlying theory and how this theory is applied before s/he can appreciate the demonstration lessons taught by a master teacher. His/her own experimentation must be accompanied by critiques either from peers or instructors. Once the teacher feels confident, s/he is encouraged to implement it at a limited scale. The full implementation in all bilingual classes of a teacher, a school or even the school district will often be contingent upon the success of the limited scale implementations of the preceding segment. Reactions from teachers in our region have been most encouraging and there is great expectation that the "Concurrent Approach" will find many supporters in the time to come.

6. Conclusion

It has been the objective of the paper to define what is known as the "Concurrent Approach" and to describe it as the technique that is most appropriate when bilinguals--or quasi-bilinguals for that matter--are taught content. Except for the teaching of language arts, the bilingual child should be reached and taught to function in his/her two languages because only this way will the child be able to internalize and to retrieve the information that s/he is exposed to in

his/her childhood and adolescent years. It has also--and mainly so--been the objective to specify the steps through which the bilingual teacher can acquire the expertise to teach through the here recommended approach, i.e. sociolinguistic sensitivity, identification of socio-pedagogical cues, conscious manipulation of his/her own (and the child's) switching practices and adaptation to this approach of his/her bilingual teaching methodology. It is hoped that the meaningfulness of the approach for an area like San Antonio, where bilinguality can be achieved at a very early age, has become clearer and that steps can soon be undertaken to make our bilingual programs more compatible with the setting of our highly bilingual school population.

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[1]In conducting this workshop, I was competently assisted by Ms. Olga Rubio, education specialist of IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association), San Antonio, Tx., who during the workshop as also elsewhere, has greatly contributed to the development and the implementation of the "Concurrent Approach." My gratitude also goes to Mr. Don G. Hughes, Superintendent, Laredo United Independent School District and Mr. Guadalupe Puente, Director, Bilingual Education Program, Clark Elementary School, Laredo, Texas, for their support of the approach developed by Ms. Rubio and myself.